

VOLUME III  
No. 2



WINTER,  
1945

"And what rough beast its hour come round at last . . ."—*William Butler Yeats*

## CHIMERA

A LITERARY QUARTERLY

---

EDITORS: BARBARA HOWES, XIMENA DE ANGULO, DAVID NEWTON  
ASSOCIATE EDITORS: WILLIAM ARROWSMITH,  
FEARON BROWN, FREDERICK MORGAN, in the Armed Forces.

---

### *Contents*



Poem: <i>Joan Murray</i> .....	2
Exposition of a Method: <i>Barbara Deming</i> .....	3
Warning to a Foetus: <i>Ted Boorum</i> .....	21
An Old Arakanese Love Poem: <i>Maurice Collis</i> .....	22
Letter to Lafayette: <i>Henry Miller</i> .....	35
About The Contributors .....	45
In the Snow-World: <i>Robert Horan</i> .....	46
Book Reviews .....	48
Index to Volumes I and II .....	54

---

Published quarterly at 265 West 11th Street, New York 14, N. Y.; 50 cents a copy, four numbers for \$2.00. Unsolicited manuscripts not returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Copyright 1945 by Barbara Howes  
Printed by Van Vechten Press, Metuchen, New Jersey

# Poem

*by Joan Murray*



The gulls of the cool Atlantic tip the foam,  
The boats that warn me of the fog, warn me of their motion.  
I have looked for my childhood amongst pebbles and my home  
Within the lean cupboards of Mother Hubbard and neat Albion.

A wind whose freshness blows over the Cape to me,  
Has made me laugh at the thought of a friend whose hair is blond.  
Still I laugh and place my hands upon the sea  
From the farthest stretch of land to the end.

I had so often run down to these shores to stare out.  
If I took an Island for a lover and Atlantic for my sheet  
There was no one to tell me that loving across distance would  
turn about  
And make the Here and Now an Elsewhere of defeat.

In my twenty-first year to have the urchin slums  
A small child at my knee, my knee the glistening chalk  
That spreads to meet the stationary boat, the water sloping as  
it comes  
And all the Devon coast of grey and abrupt rock.

By gazing across water I have flicked many gulls from my eyes,  
Shuffled small shells and green crabs from my feet.  
The day is clear, the sun bright, the piper cries  
Shrilly, tampering the untouched sand in delicate retreat.

Up beyond the height and over the bank I see my friend.  
How is your winter night and summer action?  
There need be little more than a tea-cup hour to make us each  
extend  
A mature man's simplicity or grave child's reaction.



# Exposition of a Method\*

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS FILM PROJECT

*by Barbara Deming*



SINCE the Spring of 1942 a small staff of analysts, with headquarters at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, has been previewing all American motion pictures due for commercial release (and a few foreign ones)—a yearly eye-full, if features, shorts, “documentaries,” newsreels, are counted together, of something like fourteen hundred films. Their reason for sitting down to such full fare has been to recommend each year a limited number of the fourteen hundred for preservation by the Library of Congress.

The Library is entitled, of course, to all films that are copyrighted. But a lack of storage facilities has prevented it in the past from taking advantage of this title. Even now, funds extended by the Rockefeller Foundation to cover a three-year period of experimentation make possible only limited storage. After the war perhaps a central film depository will be built, and a permanent fund voted for its administration. But considering the multitude of films produced, and the difficulty not only of shelving them but of keeping them from deterioration, it is likely that some degree of selection will continue.

The intention of the Library is to build up a collection that will serve the student of history, a collection that will illuminate,

---

\* This article, reprinted by courtesy of the Library of Congress, appears here in slightly different and extended form. The original was published by the Library of Congress Journal of Acquisitions.

in retrospect, the periods which have produced the films. It has been the analysts' job, during this period of experimentation, to determine how one recognizes the films most capable of this service; to develop a method of appraisal—a mirror to dispel the Gorgon aspect of films confronting them en masse.

The first step towards order is to distinguish the two modes in which films may reflect the period in which they are made. Films may reveal something about a period directly—they may be, in whole or in part, true-to-life; or they may reveal something indirectly—they may reflect a current mentality. The same film may of course serve the historian in both modes: at one moment the important exhibit for him will be the camera's subject; at the next it will lie beyond the camera's eye, or behind it, will be the psychology he can deduce as responsible for the camera's motions.

But in whichever mode it is afforded, the evidence has to be tested according to definite criteria. The historian deserves the most significant, most reliable and most vivid evidence. The evidence need be significant in no obvious or public sense. It also need not be reliable strictly on its own merits—supplementary evidence may play a role. But it needs to be vivid in specifically movie terms; the look afforded the historian should be one he could not duplicate through some other medium.

These criteria cannot be applied to a film in any automatic fashion, whether it is being tested for direct or indirect revelations. In the first place, a film need not by itself fit the specifications, if it will do so in conjunction with other films of its year, or in relation to films of past years. It is a collection of films, valuable as a whole, that is desired. So the films must be held up to the light of the criteria not only singly but in shifting constellations. But even if the films could be tested singly, one by one, this test could not be an automatic one, because of the complexity of the film medium—a complexity both as art form and as social product. Elaborate analysis is called for, because the film, a performing art borrowing from all the other arts, is multivocal—and its voices may speak in harmony or discord, simple or subtle. (And unlike a play, a film loses no voice with time, but is pre-



served precisely as performed.) If indirect revelations are sought, elaborate interpretation is called for also, because many people are involved in a film's making—even the demands and expectations of the public assist at the production indirectly—and so the different notes struck can be traced now to one and now to quite another causality. The analyst is obliged to commit himself to many different kinds of judgements. He must play not only the art critic but the historian, the sociologist, and the psychologist. And in the end he must play the philosopher, too, for in deciding what aspects of a society are best recorded, he decides what it is in life that is most real.

Judgements are perhaps the simplest where films are being tested for their direct revelations. In this connection films may be sorted roughly into those which afford a look at the times quite literally and those which afford it through representation, through art. Here again, judgements are simpler where the look is afforded literally. But even here they cannot be automatic. Nor can this division between literal presentation and representation hold up for long; it can be posited for a while, for the sake of convenience, but is very soon over-stepped.

## I. REVELATIONS IN THE DIRECT MODE

### (A)

*Revelations about the objects, places, persons, events presented on the screen literally, by means of "actuality" shots.*

To make wise decisions as to which "actuality" shots will prove of most direct historical significance, demands self-imposed perspective—and always a certain amount of guesswork. One must hazard: this man rather than that man, this speech rather than that speech, will go down in history. One must, in other words, play the historian oneself, and precociously.

One can play safe and save a little of everything. For instance now, during the war, the five newsreel companies draw upon a common pool of raw footage. Each edits this in its own way, but

"exclusives" are rare. So if the analysts save one company's release each time, they can say they have missed nothing. And yet there are more ways than one of missing something. If five newsreel companies had covered the Gettysburg Address, and each had used different portions of the footage available, would the historian of today forgive the collectors of yesterday for having saved only one company's version? The historian will want, on certain subjects, not just some sort of story but the nearest approximation to the whole story. For half a story may be no story. Or half a story may be a false story.

"The camera doesn't lie" is a common saying; but the camera can lie, or it can be accessory to a lie, in any number of fashions.

The lie may be one of omission. Some character executes a solemn motion of obeisance—then winks at a neighbor. If the camera omits the wink, it as good as lies. The native of a captured town shows the camera her teeth in a great big welcoming grin—then the grin explodes; an apprehensive look remains. If the camera records the beginning but not the end of this, it as good as lies.

This last example introduces another sort of lie, the lie resulting from self-consciousness. If people know they are being photographed, the document may be worthless; the behavior the camera wished to record may become at the very moment the camera appears quite another sort of behavior, put on for the occasion. It may happen of course that this second play is more worth recording than the original; for it may be just exactly his special relation to the camera that tells most about some character. G. B. Shaw is no doubt more himself performing for the camera than filmed by it unawares. At the other extreme, newsreel bits showing battle-weary soldiers advancing upon the camera as though it weren't there—just not giving a damn—are among the most eloquent documents of this war.

The sequence in which shots are arranged may effect a lie. A sequence may imply, for example, that the shots it contains were taken in the same vicinity, or in the same hour, when this is not the case. Shots may be intimately matched that originally had



nothing at all to do with each other. The week the liberation of Rome was being featured in newsreels, a shot of upturned faces beaming approval was placed by one newsreel company after a shot of Umberto on a balcony, and by another company after a shot of a Yank on a different balcony, burlesquing Mussolini.

The accompanying sound track may be responsible for the lie. In the same week just mentioned, one newsreel company ran the shots of the Pope giving a large crowd his blessing, to an accompaniment of cheers and whistling and hoarse calls; another implied a respectful hush. Even a musical accompaniment can lead one to think that one is seeing something actually not visible in a film. It can lead one, for example, to attribute to a group of figures a special mood. The commentator, "interpreting" the scene, can play the same misleading role. And the commentator can of course identify shots incorrectly.

Films may be unworthy of preservation under the category of direct revelations because they mislead, because they orient one falsely; or they may be unworthy because they don't really lead one to any knowledge, because they provide no orientation at all.

The search for the most valuable documents among "actuality" shots is a search above all for glimpses that are intelligible wholes. It is easy to give the criterion "vivid" a superficial reading and make a collection of brilliant fragments that do not tell much. The camera can provide us with startling views, and film cutting transport us magically from spot to spot, and we can sit back goggle-eyed—having been shown very little. It is possible to see a great deal of footage, and think of oneself as having sat in on the events in question, but discover, on seeing a really exceptional film on the subject, that one has had little conception before of what was going on.

There is even sometimes occasion to be grateful for the accidental shackling of the camera; it may allow one to orient oneself as one has previously been unable to do. One of this war's most lively bits of newsreel is a sequence taken aboard an aircraft carrier under attack. The camera, because of battle conditions, is arbitrarily rooted to one spot. Just because of this, and because

there's no need to try and figure out from one shot to another where one's supposed to be, one can use one's eyes to the limit, can really look sharp.

Superficial reading of the criterion "vivid" can be corrected if it is thought of continually in the light of the criterion "significant." The historian will be interested in knowing what went on most particularly in terms of the human experience involved. It is the films which orient one in this special regard that will be most valuable to him.

It can be the element of art of course rather than the element of accident that serves to orient one. Every now and then a film comes along which employs no footage that is particularly new—even, perhaps, employs nothing but "library" footage — but, through art, orients one among the fragments, gathers them together under one unifying principle, so that one looks at the familiar shots and finds that they contain surprises. These films are worth saving above all. "Desert Victory" is such a film. "Battle of Russia," composed almost entirely of "library" footage, is another.

It is worth noting that "Desert Victory" makes use not only of some "library" shots but of some specially enacted shots. But here, instead of decreasing the reliability of the film as a document, they can be said to increase it, for they contribute to its intelligibility. "Desert Victory" also makes use of dubbed-in sound. And again it can be said that reliability is increased rather than decreased. If it is true that inappropriate sound effects can distract and delude one's eyes, it is also true that appropriate sound effects can in effect open one's eyes. One sense can help another along. In a really good film one can even develop a sense of smell.

At this point the distinction set up for convenience' sake between literal presentation and representation through art has been firmly over-stepped.



(B)

*Revelations about the objects, places, persons, events, represented on the screen, through art.*

A studio-made film, because of the leisure and the safety that attend its shooting, and because of the professional relation of the human subjects to the camera eye upon them, can sometimes round out a story, provide a glimpse that is an intelligible whole, where an "actuality" film could not. At the level of exploring a scene of action, and of exploring what one might call a routine of action, "In Which We Serve" affords such a glimpse of this war. So, to varying degrees, do "Action in the North Atlantic," "Guadalcanal Diary," "Sahara" and others. They make the floor-plan of battle clearer to us.

But where at this rather mechanical level of exhibiting the literal motions men go through in battle, the films mentioned are scrupulously reliable, at the more complex level of exhibiting the psychological motions men go through, they are much less reliable. As soon as it is human experience that is being explored, the picture that is not only a vivid picture but a true picture becomes a rarity. It takes vision and honesty, and it takes art, not just scrupulosity, to depict with any accuracy the social and psychological realities special to the times.

As soon as it is human experience that is being explored, it takes a degree of honesty on the part of the analyst to recognize the truth. The analyst is open to the same temptations that the artist is, to rationalize, to dream day-dreams; he is not beyond picking as a true picture the picture he would like to think true. But although it is difficult to find and to recognize a picture true at this level, the picture if it can be found is of more significance to the historian than a picture true at a more mechanical level, for it is more difficult to reconstruct in retrospect the psychological realities of a period than it is to reconstruct the material realities. Fortunately, though a picture that is consistently true at this level is rare, certain facts about the moving picture as a medium conspire to let the truth through in fragments, in brief flares.

The fact that the film is a performing art, preserved as performed, introduces the chance that the actors, who beneath their paint are quite literally true-to-life people of the period, will involuntarily scuff in onto the carpet with them a bit of this real life—will speak not for the play merely but for themselves.

Thus, to begin again at the most literal level, the historian can often trust a fiction film just as well as an actuality film to tell him how the people of the period wore their clothes, handled the daily props of life, pronounced the language. (This is true of course to any extent only where the mode of acting is naturalistic. And even here, the historian will need guidance from the analyst in spotting as such certain brands of exaggeration—where, for example, Hollywood provides its own version of professional, class or race idiosyncrasies.) There are special activities, such as singing, dancing, music-making, which can convey even more than everyday gesture the spirit of an age, its special idiom and manner, and which can safely be taken by the historian to have been executed in real life pretty much as he sees them executed on the screen. No great demands will have been made upon honesty here—there is little pressure to distort the facts of how one sings or dances.

But even at more complex levels, levels at which there is pressure to fictify, the actors will sometimes scuff in with them something of the truth. It is chiefly the realities of social antipathy that are likely to flare through the fabric of a film—antipathies between race and race or class and class. This happens pretty exclusively in the cheaper grade of films, the "quickies." In the Grade A super production, the comforting cliché, the pleasant lie, will be wrapped in cellophane, air-tight. But in the "quickie" the fiction gets a more casual handling. The script is a hasty job to begin with. The actors go through their lines without undue fretting about the script's intentions, improvising with their own immediate feelings, acting by reflex. And there are few retakes. Thus a line will be given extra vehemence, or a gesture will be inserted between the lines, quite over-stepping the bounds of the script. A white character will yell at a Negro: "Get out of my



way!" A show girl will give a rich highly-educated Boston youth a look of pity and disdain.

Very occasionally the script will intentionally allow the actor to speak his natural piece. Thus in "I Walked With a Zombie," produced by Val Lewton, the double-edged relationship between Negro and White is part of the film's original design. The film is sharply eloquent about this relationship because the Negro actors know so well what the play is they are enacting, but it took on the part of Lewton a rare degree of sophistication to allow the actors this play.

It may have taken a degree of boldness, too. But the film aroused no comment on this score, so far as I know. And this fact implies another characteristic of the movie medium (a characteristic of any imaginative medium) that can assist sometimes at the flickering materialization of the truth. A film is multivocal, can speak at several different levels simultaneously. So sometimes articulation at one level of an accepted cliché will leave the way open at another level for bald reportage of the truth—without any one's being unduly disturbed. Not only is "I Walked With a Zombie" set by Lewton in the West Indies, so that one need not take the picture as relevant to conditions in this country; it is also at the surface level nothing more than a thriller, involving voodoo and zombies and the like, and frequently speaks in the accents of the most accepted popular magazine trash, so that the public is not obliged to take its undertones seriously.

But it is more frequently out of the naiveté than out of the sophistication of film makers that something of the truth will be allowed to stare through at us. The makers will arrange the cliché at the surface, and having in this motion affirmed that life is palatable, will be able without flinching to report all along the way the most unpleasant facts. "Underdog" is a good example. At the surface level this film is a simple-minded success story. Mother, father and son move from farm to city, and make good in the war effort. Actually, all along the way the film exhibits quite accurately some of the painful pressures that war-time conditions can exert. The mother feels compelled to make more

money, keep up with these new city neighbors; she is also very uncomfortable because the father is not in uniform; the little boy feels he must make the grade with the neighborhood gang, even though he holds them in a certain disdain, and he too is embarrassed because the father is not in uniform; the father feels bullied by all, and wants to be back on his farm. Everything shapes up all right. But the shaping up is all Hollywood's; the original condition continues to speak out to us in a voice all its own.

With all such films it is the responsibility of the analyst to isolate very clearly the voice the historian may trust; and if the voice wavers, it is his responsibility to mark the spot. With the film just mentioned, this is not too difficult a job; but on some films the operation is extremely delicate. In Preston Sturges' films, for example, one finds often not two voices contradicting each other at separate levels, but two contradictory voices twined into a single voice of wondrous ambiguity. For Sturges has a sharp eye for the something rotten or phoney in the particular Denmark, but even as he is exposing the kingdom, suddenly, disarmingly, he will be winking at us from the throne. He will put his finger, with sharp satire, on a particular weakness in a character or in a society, some phoney bent—then proceed with unexcelled dexterity to rake this same character or society out of the coals, so that we may all go home untroubled. The problem with his films is to distinguish the original vision from the compromise.

With Sturges another point can be illustrated. Direct film glimpses into some typical psychology of the time need not be afforded in the naturalistic mode. Sturges makes his original telling incisions in the style of high farce. Even an animated cartoon substituting animal for human figures can, by caricature, afford the desired glimpse. The cartoon "Swooner Crooner," for example, employing hysterical chicken figures, does a rather neat job on the phenomenon of Sinatra worship.

It may be objected that in committing himself to a certain style, the artist intrudes himself, makes a judgement about what



men are and what life is—and we are at a level of reality where no objective criterion of what is true or what is false exists. But naturalism is a style as well as farce, and implies a judgement. Even if the artist adopts no clear style, he makes a judgement. The judgement may be that he doesn't know what to think of the material, but this is still a judgement. Even where the film is composed of actuality shots, the sequence in which the shots are arranged implies a judgement; the original motion described by the camera's eye implies a judgement; even if the projector is stopped and the shot is viewed as a still, the angle at which the camera has been set implies a judgement. There is no such thing as a presentation of events that is impersonal.

This is the crux of the difficulty of selecting films as true-to-life: The material level will always contain implications of the level of experience, the level of social and psychological reality. The literal may be rather unintelligible, rather meaningless, unless given a clear context in these terms. Yet the artist can not define social and psychological realities without committing himself, wittingly or unwittingly, to certain philosophical judgements. If he hedges about these judgements, seeks to avoid committing himself, the material becomes less intelligible, less vivid, yet at this level of reality one can no longer speak of true or false with any authority. It is necessary to go warily; one must always be isolating, circumscribing, what of the picture one may trust. It is best to look chiefly for the more material revelations—the milieu of the period, the daily routine of living. It is best, in searching for a definition of those psychological and social realities in terms of which alone the material realities come alive, to turn to the indirect mode of revelation. In that mode, the inevitable signature of the artist (or artists) is no longer our limitation. We need no longer try to leave it out of the picture; it is the very object of our study.

## II. REVELATIONS IN THE INDIRECT MODE

(OR TO BE DEDUCED FROM THE LIFE ON THE SCREEN)

The job so far has been to scan each film for its value as a direct mirror of the period. The job from here on is to step through the looking glass—to seek revelations about the people who made the films, and about the people for whom the films were made. For this it becomes no longer pertinent to sort films into those employing actuality shots and those employing staged shots. This was convenient when our concern was with the fidelity to life of the image on the screen, but our concern now is with the psychology responsible for the film. Although the two different kinds of shots are often to different degrees pliable to the artist's will, still it is the nature of that will that is now pertinent. So I shall speak first of films which are topical, which take the issues of the day consciously as their subject matter—and in the process openly reveal what attitudes towards those issues the film makers hold, and the film audience will accept. I shall speak next of those films which intend primarily to entertain—but which, since they are made for people who wish release from the stress of the day's issues, can reveal those issues, and current attitudes toward them, as dreams do, darkly.

### (A)

#### *Topical Films*

As soon as one tries to sort out those films which consciously treat of the day's issues, it becomes apparent that the distinction set up is, again, a tenuous one. Certain films easily fit the definition: The March of Time, the army orientation film, the news-reel in which the commentator flatly editorializes, the fiction film in which the characters virtually exhort us, in person, to follow one program of action or another. But there is also the news-reel or "documentary" which exposes a certain condition without verbal comment; there is the fiction film which does the same, or which without describing a certain condition at all, casts a sharp light on it obliquely. And the artist may be quite conscious of how



he is stacking the cards, or he may not be. There are all degrees of subtlety in presentation, and there are all degrees of consciousness of intention. Without pretending that there are any real boundaries to this field, then, I shall merely posit it for a while, for convenience' sake, and then dissolve it.

A film's very choice of subject matter declares: It was thought important or it was thought profitable at the time to talk about this particular matter. The historian has part of an answer already to the question of what were the issues of the day. Yet he sometimes has not enough of an answer unless he knows *who* thought it profitable or important to talk of the subject, and *to whom*. Topical films are more likely than others to be not regular commercial releases but special government releases; or commercial releases with special government backing. They may also be intended for distribution among specialized audiences. The Signal Corps orientation films, for example, were made for armed services personnel, although some of them have since achieved more general distribution. "War Department Report" was addressed particularly to war workers. In the case of these particular films, it would be apparent to the historian what audience was intended. But this is not always the case; sometimes it must be the analyst's job to inform him. For example, a film was made which praised the French Canadians for their all-out patriotic contribution to this war; as far as I know, this film was distributed not through all of Canada, not through the United States, but exclusively to the French Canadians. Another film, praising Southern farmers for their contribution, was distributed, as far as I know, exclusively in the South.

The historian will sometimes be in a much better position to deduce the significance of the attitudes expressed in a film, if he knows some of the facts not only about its distribution but about its reception—if he is provided by the analyst with a good sampling of reviews and of any special articles that may have been provoked. Such films as "Mission to Moscow" and "Lifeboat" might mislead him about these times, if he were not familiar with the controversy they aroused.

One would be inclined to say that all films arousing special controversy should be saved automatically. But sometimes a film that is in itself very unaggressive, politically speaking, will arouse a storm of political comment. For example, Westbrook Pegler raised a hubbub about "Action in the North Atlantic," citing it as evidence that Communism has a foothold in Hollywood—this because the film dramatizes the heroisms of the Merchant Marine. If the film were not worth saving on the score that it makes certain aspects of this war mechanically clearer to us, a simple description of the film, or perhaps its script, with Pegler's exclamations of horror attached, might well suffice the historian. In this case it is the comment about the film that is the primary exhibit; the film merely sheds light upon the comment, is not in itself vivid.

Too often the evidence in this field is not in film flesh. Too often, for example, it is the film's script that is the primary exhibit, and there is no need to save the film. It is very much the fashion at the moment to make films after topical novels and plays, and it is a weakness especial to such films that they still try to say everything with the word, and add no new dimension of their own. The script, and perhaps a few stills, to indicate types employed in the leading roles, would suffice the historian. Film editorials are also very liable to lean upon the word. The word carries the argument; every transition is effected by the word; sometimes it supplies even the poetic dimension—the commentator indulges in rich verbal metaphors. Meanwhile the film image itself, providing literal-minded illustrations, is but a drudge.

Sometimes it happens, however, that although a film has its argument complete on paper, the visuals will unofficially take over the show, and advance their own argument, against the grain of the verbal argument. The resulting discord will tell the historian much. I have remarked that this can happen in the newsreels. It can also happen in a March of Time. I think of one commentary about how liberal the trend is in a certain country, spoken to the accompaniment of shots of clean-faced ordered youths filing through health clinics, performing handsome calis-



thenics, and the like—shots echoing newsreels out of Nazi Germany, out of Fascist Italy. Here is a passage that would speak loud to the historian of what our period has been slow to learn.

The visuals can run away with the show in a fiction film quite as well as in a film employing actuality shots. Such films may provide exceptional exhibits of the relation in a certain period between attitudes consciously and attitudes subconsciously entertained. It is interesting, for example, to inquire what story the producers of "Lifeboat" thought they were telling, and what story in the last analysis is told. The issue supposedly paramount in this film is: What shall we do about the Germans? The film composes itself formally in relation to this issue. It begins as the captain of a sunken Nazi submarine is picked up by survivors of the ship his submarine torpedoed, and after detailing a grueling adventure, which culminates in their ganging up to toss the Nazi overboard, it ends, in *aria da capo* fashion, as a second Nazi is being picked up; it ends voicing the question: What are we going to do with him? But although it composes itself formally around this issue, the issue that it worries more doggedly still is the familiar one of whether Labor and Capital are going to get along in the democracies. It stages a complicated allegory in this relation. For example, it is Labor's boot that Capital uses to knock the Nazi over the head. And for example, Capital and Labor quarrel bitterly in a poker game, each accusing the other of cheating, each gloating and threatening whenever good cards come his way. At the very end, by having the two behave with elaborate politeness toward each other about who owes whom just how much, the film seems to predict that after the war, Labor and Capital will discard their grievances and walk hand in hand. That is, one can puzzle out of the word, and out of the allegorical gesture, that the film intends this.

But it is interesting to examine "Lifeboat" from one special standpoint: to ask where it comes most to life, to ask what passages the audience can, without puzzling out what the words intend, without puzzling out what the allegorical gestures intend, apprehend sensuously. In terms of the issue of harmony between

Labor and Capital, it must be said that it is in those passages where the two are scrapping, rather than in those passages where they are honoring each other, that the film comes to life. But there is one passage above all in which the film mobilizes the resources of the medium, so that one does not have to use one's head at all to grasp what is going on. The storm has nearly swamped the boat. Tallulah and the stoker have decided to go down together with a kiss. A wave breaks over us from the screen, then dissipates in tiny bubbles. As the screen clears, we see the little boat, far off, riding a calm sea. We return to it in closeup. The backdrop behind the boat is no longer, as in previous scenes, a sky full of motion; it is a white sky, white and blank. Looming against this sky, the Nazi, now in control of the boat, rows, and his fists, foreshortened, lurch forward at us—as the others, draped wantonly upon each other, or piping German lullabies on a little tin pipe, or babbling for water, go altogether to hell, give it all up, let the Nazi take over. With this vision, one can say that another issue materializes: the issue of whether or not the democracies have any longer a foundation in a living faith, a working faith that can stand up against the Nazi's ruthless logic. At the conscious level, in terms of the carefully-arranged allegory, the film is nicely optimistic on this score. But at this deeper level, where it lives, it is as dubious as can be.

At this point it is possible to make a statement about the general limitations of what films in this topical grouping will be able to signify to the historian. These films will be able to reveal to him what the makers thought to be major issues of the day, or found it expedient to say they thought. And they will be able to reveal to him what the makers thought they thought about these issues, or found it expedient to say they thought. Comments about these films, given the historian as supplementary evidence, will help him gauge the acceptance of these opinions by the public at large. But here again, these written comments about the films will not tell him the whole story of the public's response, for unless the movie-goer is exceptionally sophisticated, what he will write about his response will be a rationalization. Most of the

attitudes expressed in the films, the historian will be able to find, just as well, in the newspapers, the magazines, the best-sellers of the period. Where the imagery is given any real sway in a film, he will be able to learn a little more about the real content of these attitudes than he could by meeting them in the public print; and sometimes he will be able to decipher, beneath the surface, attitudes not fully realized by the artists, or will be able to discern, even, issues with which they are concerned without their knowledge. But these glimpses will be rare. It would be possible for the historian to have before him all the so-called topical films of a period, and still not learn the period's chief hopes or fears.

### (B)

*"Entertainment" Films—Films which are not Topical but which, because they are in the nature of day-dreams peddled to the public, bear the same relation dreams do to the events of the day.*

There is **no** pretense that this field is sharply divided from the first. Topical films as well as these are made to sell. And it would be silly to say that producers are in this field single-mindedly devoted to providing entertainment, with no consideration, conscious or unconscious, clumsy or subtle, of taking this stand or that stand on certain issues. The two fields overlap. A film like "Lifeboat" certainly straddles both. A change of focus is involved here, rather than a change of landscape. The focus is now on those films which above all mean to serve the public as day-dreams. It is in a wise selection of a time's most popular film day-dreams that the historian will find evidence of issues and of attitudes not talked of, not professed, but felt in the bones. From a study of these films, together with the topical films, he will be able to learn much about the equilibrium existing between deep-felt attitudes and verbalized attitudes, and from this will be able to deduce something of the state of health of the culture as a whole.

An obvious gauge of a film's success as a dream is its box office take. It might seem that the analyst's job could be reduced to



these very simple terms: select for the historian those films which net most at the box office. But box office take can not be automatically equated with attendance figures. One would have to do something about comparing box office take with price of ticket, or one would neglect entirely dreams from the field of the cheaper productions. Also, the fact that a lot of people go to a film does not inevitably mean that once they get there they enjoy themselves. Any publicity man knows that flukes of chance can play a large part in a film's financial success. And in these days of lavish publicity stunts, box office receipts may well mean above all that the producers sank a lot of money in the film and mean to get it back, by plugging the film hard. There is another consideration. Even if one could figure out, on a sliding scale, which were the most popular films, it might turn out that in saving those at the top, one would be saving the same dream over and over again, or the same dreams. The only reliable procedure for making available to the historian a representative selection of the film dreams of a period is to distinguish those dream elements which recur in one film after another, and see that a selection of films is made which is representative in this respect.

The difficulty is that as soon as the analyst sets out to spot these recurrent elements, he can become lost in a sea of data. He is to make a cross-section, but where is he to start to cut? Should he, for example, pull out one of each general type: one Western, one Mystery, one Cops-and-Robbers, one Musical, one Romance, one Slapstick and so on? If so, should he pull out only examples of each type in its pure form, or should he represent mixed forms, too—the Mystery that is also a Slapstick, the Western that is also a Musical? Where should this stop? And should he also sort out recurrent character types? Should he sort out recurrent situations? Should he sort out recurrent plot twists? And in each of these cases, where should he draw the line?

It is obviously necessary to have represented only the most significant symptoms; only, in fact, what in medicine are known as syndromes—significant constellations of symptoms. The same symptom may occur in a variety of diseases; it is by the syndrome

the doctor arrives at a diagnosis. And here is the crux of the difficulty of applying selective criteria to films in this field: until the analyst has tried to interpret the films as dreams, he won't be able to make a good selection. Until he is able to hazard what the significance of a certain dream element is, he won't be able to say even that it is significant. Until he begins to develop some sense of what the dreams mean, he won't even be able to recognize them as dreams, or tell one from another.

---

[The second half of this paper will appear in the Spring issue, and will demonstrate how one can analyze films for their dream content.]

## Warning to a Foetus

*by Ted Boorum*



Whatever it is that makes the sun  
Collect within a drop of ice, or run  
Some warmth down through the shaggy icicles  
That fur the belly of the sleeping gun,  
Whatever gets this glitter in the way  
Of steel, that gives its tired gray  
A spark, or gems the rusting tricycles  
Within the Colonel's yard, is mine today;  
Is mine, is mine though only mine to borrow,  
Is mine today, but will be yours tomorrow.

# An Old Arakanese Love Poem

by *Ugga Byan*

TRANSLATED, AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
MAURICE COLLIS



READERS of my *The Land of the Great Image*<sup>1</sup> will remember how the Portuguese friar, Brother Manrique, came in 1630 over the rainy mountains to Mahamuni in Arakan,<sup>2</sup> the most celebrated Buddhist shrine at that time in Further India. The King of Arakan, Thiri-thu-dhamma, was visiting the shrine, having travelled by house-boat from his capital, Mrauk-u, the Monkey's Egg, which lay on the River of Jems some forty miles distant. The friar was received in audience at the foot of the sacred hill, Sirigutta, upon the top of which stood the Mahamuni, one of the portrait images of the Buddha supposed to have been cast in his lifetime, —another being located in Tavatimsa, a paradisaal region inhabited by the displaced Hindu gods, who, having been converted to the truth, desired to possess in their territory an image of the Blessed One to worship.

The friar had important political business in Arakan and in any event, as a narrow Augustinian monk, had no interest whatever in the extraordinary religious centre at which he found himself. While he was there, the royal procession to the shrine took place, the King in his palanquin surrounded by the whole Court, the officials, the astrologers and the principal abbots passing up the slope in brilliant sunshine, but he does not describe it in his mem-

<sup>1</sup> Reviewed in this issue.

<sup>2</sup> A part of modern Burma.



oirs nor does he appear to have entered the precincts to view the great image, the subsidiary carvings, the sacred banyan or the library. Had he done so, and been accompanied by a competent guide, he might have met a singular person who at the time was resident there in the menial capacity of a servant to the shrine, an outcast status known as that of pagoda-slave, but who once had been Court Poet and Royal Tutor.

This person was Ugga Byan, the most celebrated of Arakanese poets and the author of the poem which is translated below.

The lives of Orientals who rise high in their world are often characterised by catastrophic falls. In the reign of Razagri (1593-1612), the grandfather of Thiri-thu-dhamma, Ugga Byan received the appointment of Royal Tutor to the heir apparent, Minkha Maung, as he was afterwards styled. Minkha Maung was in his teens and Ugga Byan was probably about twenty-five. The poet was by character signally unfitted to be a tutor, for his disposition was wild. He and his charge became the centre of an unruly Court set, which while dabbling in erudition and poetry was more noted for its brawls, quarrels and adventures. King Razagri, the most eminent of the Arakanese monarchs, was much occupied with wars and building projects, and did not find time, or was too frequently absent, to exercise sufficient control over his son. The Court set becoming more bold, a conspiracy was hatched with the object of doing away with the King. But the plot leaked out and, in the investigation which followed, it was established that both the heir-apparent and the poet were implicated. Razagri shrank from extreme measures and banished both of them to Burma. This event occurred about 1596. The Burmese capital was then Pegu, the ruling King being Nanda-bayin. The Burmese who not long before had sacked Ayudhya, the capital of Siam, were living in the atmosphere of a great victory. The city was very splendid. Ralph Fitch, who visited the place ten years earlier, said it was a bigger and more imposing city than London. Ugga Byan and his prince were made welcome at Court. The poet's verses could be appreciated, for the language of the two Courts was very similar, and he became as celebrated there as at

home. The poem here translated was written at this time. The princess, who is represented as speaking throughout, is supposed to be Prince Minkha Maung's wife, lamenting over her husband's continued absence abroad.

King Razagri pardoned the delinquents after they had been in exile a couple of years and recalled them to Arakan, actuated partly, it may be, by the schemes he was even then evolving for the sack of Pegu, an enterprise which he put into effect in 1599, when he carried away to Arakan the Siamese loot in the Pegu treasury, and, in particular, the White Elephant, the possession of which was deemed sufficient patent for him to declare himself afterwards the leading Buddhist king in the world. Both the prince and the poet accompanied him on the expedition. But their inclination to conspire had not been damped, for in the course of the campaign they plotted a second time to take the King's life. Again their plot was discovered and again the King took a lenient course, in this case not even imposing the mild penalty of exile to an agreeable Court, but taking them back into full favour. His clemency is said to have been due to a brilliant feat of arms performed by the two companions, the nature of which is somewhat obscure and seems to have consisted in their cutting their way through the enemy's ranks.

But the prince and the poet were incorrigible. In 1600, after the triumphal return to Arakan with the loot, they made a third attempt. They were at Saudoway, further down the coast, on a visit to its three famous pagodas, which contained relics of the Buddha in his various incarnations. Instead of confining themselves to works of piety, they released and armed the pagoda-slaves dedicated to the upkeep of those sacred edifices, and marching on Mrauk-u, the capital, sought by a *coup-de-main* to seize the throne. But Razagri, who had won notable campaigns both in India and Burma, was not so easily caught. He met, defeated and captured the boon companions.

Taking the view that his son's lapses were wholly due to the bad influence of his tutor—a view, one feels, he might have taken earlier—he decided to separate the two forever. The most ob-

vious way to effect this would have been to execute Ugga Byan, but he selected another method which was equally effective. He dedicated the poet as a pagoda-slave to the great image of Mahamuni.

It is difficult to comprehend the extreme of disgrace involved in such a punishment, because the conception of legal outcast does not exist among us. For the man who had been the idol of two courts, whose verses were repeated everywhere and who had been the most influential literary and political personage in the realm, it was, in fact, a living death, as we must suppose it was meant to be. Not that his duties were painfully arduous, consisting as they did in sweeping the halls and enclosures of the shrine or working in the fields bequeathed for its upkeep. But he was ostracized, had no money, no company beyond his fellow slaves, prisoners of war, pirates and such-like, no audience for his verses or facility for composing, and no hope, for once a pagoda-slave always a pagoda-slave. On the death of Razagri in 1612, his old friend Minkha Maung came to the throne. It is said that the new King thought of reinstating him in society, but public opinion and immemorial custom were too strong: even an absolute monarch could not prevail against them. Ugga Byan was obliged to remain a dedicated slave. What an interesting conversation might have taken place between him and Brother Manrique eighteen years later! The old grandee, bedraggled and burnt by the sun, had a story to tell of moving import. Milton blind under his oak, Villon on the scaffold, Rimbaud returning from Africa to die, such tragic circumstances touch us with peculiar force because they contrast so cruelly with the paradisaal world of poetry. Ugga Byan, sweeping the withered leaves from the steps of the Mahamuni, would have been a yet more poignant spectacle of distress. But perhaps the supposed interview with the friar would have been a tragi-comedy, for we know enough of Manrique's character and methods to be sure that he would have seized the opportunity to press (and with little tact) upon the pagan bard the consolations of Catholicism.

The poem translated below is regarded as Ugga Byan's mas-



terpiece. A few palm-leaf copies of it are preserved in the possession of the literati of Arakan. The form is that known as the Ratu or Seasonal Ode, an Arakanese form dating from the eighth century and founded upon classical Hindu models. In such poems there are always twelve strophes describing the climate and festivals of the twelve months of the year. As they purport to be the complaint of a wife separated from her husband for one reason or another, they may be termed laments. Though the present one was written three hundred and fifty years ago in an Oriental country with a religion and customs far different from our own, it contains few obscurities, being, indeed, very much easier to understand than the generality of poems written today. It deals throughout with sentiments which are common to humanity all over the world and at all times, and its description of weather, festivals and rural happenings is also universal. Being without sophistication, it is unlike the ordinary run of Court poetry. Indeed, to speak of it as Court poetry is misleading, for its feeling is that of the open air and of the heart of man, a quality to which it owes its enduring interest. For its complete comprehension it is only necessary to remind the reader of one circumstance. The Arakanese of the seventeenth century, who regarded themselves as followers of the Hinayana or Apostolic school of Buddhism, held the Buddha to be the master of the gods, inasmuch as he was the only mortal to whom in that cycle the truth of things had been revealed. He resided in the condition known as nirvana, which has no defined location, but the age-old gods of the Orient lived in defined paradises and continued their rôles of helping and hindering mankind, while looking up to Buddha as to a superior. Needless to say, this was not orthodox Hinayana Buddhism but it was certainly the practice at the time in question. With this hint the reader will have no difficulty in placing the celestial personages mentioned in the poem, such as the Sun Lord, the Rain Lord, and the Lord of Paradise. The Buddhism we speak of had simply turned into Buddhists the gods known in India as Surya, Parjanya and Indra, and left them to go on with their ancient avocations.

We are now equipped to read the poem, which in addition to the reasons already stated has the further actuality that the account it gives of Arakan is in no whit old-fashioned, for rural life there today, the crops, the festivals and customs, continue much as they were in the seventeenth century.

\* \* \*

## AN OLD ARAKANESE LOVE POEM

### TABAUNG — MARCH

The lady offers spring flowers at a forest shrine on behalf of her absent Lord.

Today I took early the forest path:  
Here a parched wind was driving the fallen leaves,  
But already new sprays feathered the boughs,  
So young and fresh that tears came to my eyes.  
By the wayside were all the flowers of Tabaung,  
Each in his choice place, like a jewel well set,  
The Silver Flower, the Flower of a Hundred Passions,  
The multitude of the forest flowers of spring.  
So, hushed by sweet odours, neither hot nor a-cold,  
I went in prayer for you, picking a nosegay  
Of blossoms the brightest that I could find;  
And with it on my head I climbed the steps  
And offered it to Buddha in his niche.

### TAGU — APRIL

She prays that miraculously her Lord may return and go with her to the  
boat races.

Let me recite my prayer with lifted hands.  
Tabaung is over and gone; Tagu begins;  
The New Year comes with its merry festivals;  
But you are far from me at a foreign court.  
The rains will soon fall, but you have not written;  
No message of love, not a word, have you sent.

Are you not longing to be home in the springtime?  
I heard a bird sing in the forest today:  
Its voice was my voice calling you to come back.  
What if the Lord of Paradise from his seat on Mount Meru  
Should hear and transport you suddenly to me!  
This year the boat-races are on the River of Jems,  
South of the city of the Golden Monkey's Egg.

#### KASON — MAY

Watching the thunderstorms that prelude the monsoon, she is the more  
saddened by her Lord's absence.

The Water Feast is past; a new moon waxes,  
And waxes my longing for your return, love.  
Everywhere doves woo in the tamarind trees,  
Where sunlight is a mist of coolest green;  
And parrots like an emerald canopy  
Fly overhead and wheel and skim away.  
Ah! that together we might watch the sky,  
And see, as I today, the Rain Lord mass  
His thunder-clouds; behold the joyous Sun Lord,  
Brave in his coat of a myriad scarlet flames,  
Issue and set his horses at a gallop  
In circuit of the Mount of Paradise!  
The Lord of the Mount, reclining on the summit,  
Indulgent, kindly, looked on pleased awhile,  
Until, an amber wand in his left hand,  
His right upholding a sword, he gave an order.  
At once the Rain Lord summoned back the clouds,  
Darkened the sky, shot javelin flashes down,  
And flung a sudden shower to settle the dust.  
But these enchantments, which should be my comfort,  
Made me the more depressed, for I remembered  
That last year when I watched the thunderstorms  
You sat beside me on a scarlet rug.



## NAYON — JUNE

As the wet fields wait for the plough, so does she wait for her Lord.

Last month the monsoon struggled to break loose;  
But now a free rain-wind has set south-west,  
A wind of clouds, which rise from a horned sea  
And hang like black silk drapings over earth.  
Longer and heavier the showers; the rain spills down:  
Time is to look to cattle and to plough gear.  
In fields, no longer parched, the egrets peck,  
Their young at heel learning to find the worm,  
Till, sated all, they fly, fond wing to wing.  
The palace stands above these waiting fields;  
I look them over from the Eastern Terrace.  
That my sight carried to the eastern land,  
The cruel land that denies my love to me!

## WAZO — JULY

The rainy season discomforts her as she lies thinking of her Lord.

Half a year is gone; monks begin already  
To prepare for Lent in forest retreats.  
No longer the Sun Lord circumambulates  
The sacred Mount, while ever the Rain Lord  
Empties his water, though prone on the ground  
I beseech the Heavenly Lord to stop him:  
But daily a sky like a dirty clout  
And air so damp that my clothes are mildewed.  
Humid my pillow, the pillow we shared;  
My tears overflow, as tossing I lie  
And hear from the closes and monastery gardens  
The boom of bronze gongs and the snap of wood clappers,  
Hour by slow hour till the first cock-crow.

## WAGAUNG — AUGUST

At the height of the rains she reproaches her Lord that he is less merciful than  
the Lord of Paradise.

Wazo indeed was wet, but in Wagaung  
A deluge tumbles down without respite,  
Drumming morosely on the palace roof,  
Enough to dull me were my spirits good,  
In my abandonment a sound most desolate.  
Desolate, too, the view of the wide plain,  
Stretching to hills scarce seen in driving mist,  
A checker-board of squares, each square a swamp,  
Dotted with pale green spikelets of young rice.  
Yet, I know well that were the rain to cease,  
We should haste with gifts to the holy shrines  
Lest the rice shrivelled, and the Lord of Heaven  
Would answer our prayers, for mercy is his rule.  
But you nor prayer nor grief makes merciful;  
Harder your heart than his, more cold, aloof.  
I write in tears; autumn is not far off.  
How can you linger when you know my heartache?

## TAWTHALIN — SEPTEMBER

With the passing of the rains longing assails her the more ardently.

The last of the rain feebly dribbles away.  
Tawthalin's ripening glow covers the land:  
On every hillside patch of rice men laugh;  
From every hilltop garden they scare birds;  
Watching the crops go yellow all are cheered;  
The farmer's house is gay with talk and friends;  
Bird-song and bee-drone swell the hum of gladness;  
Filled with wild sounds, the forest trembles with life,  
And he that walks in it feels no fatigue.  
Ah! love, all the love-thoughts, all the old longings  
Of so many months rise and assail me now!

If on these nights of Tawthalin we two  
Could be lying in my chamber, side by side,  
I would have you as close to me as the chain  
Of emeralds that winds about my throat.

#### WAGYUT — OCTOBER

She describes the happiness of the people at the end of Lent and the vision  
of her Lord that she had at that season.

Over is Lent at last, and all make ready  
For the Feast of Lights when the moon is full:  
Some renew the sacred white umbrellas,  
Make coloured lanterns in the form of beasts,  
And flower-sprays to carry in procession;  
Others observe the Precepts, Eight and Five,  
Doing the charity that becomes a Buddhist;  
An idler sort, with mirth to give away,  
Parade the town to the sound of flute and gong.  
The children, too, have games for these glad days:  
They knead their cooked rice into toy pagodas,  
Stand in a ring and shout old songs in chorus,  
Clapping the time with bamboos and with hands.  
So each awaits the night of plenitude,  
When every window-sill, and every niche,  
And all the battlements will burn with lamps.  
I too await it; daring still to hope,  
I rose to pray this morn when thick the mist,  
And peering in the veil of seething white  
Believed I saw you issue from its folds,  
A-gallop towards the Gate of the White Elephant.

#### TASAUNGMON — NOVEMBER

At the Festival of Sulamuni, when lamps are offered to the Buddha's image in  
Paradise, she confesses that she has nearly given up hope.

The sign of Tasaungmon is a chilly wind.  
Still festivals and fairs are in every village:



Those who would worship the Sulamuni,  
The Lord's image that is shrined in Paradise,  
Erect a bamboo sixty cubits in height  
And run a rope of lanterns to the top  
With music and a catch of rural song.  
That I could offer up such lamps with you!  
Day in, day out, my prayers for your return  
Have gone to the holy relics of the Buddha;  
But no power heeds, no answer is vouchsafed.  
Nevertheless I pray on, though the winds of night  
Nip me as I linger kneeling at my shrine,  
Hope on the ebb: how long the empty months  
Since first I plucked the nosegay of spring flowers!

#### NADAW — DECEMBER

She complains that the angels of the lesser paradises have neglected to comfort her and states that she has reported them for idleness to both the earthly and the heavenly great images of the Buddha.

Flowers of Nadaw have come, but nights are cold,  
Bitterly cold for one who waits alone,  
Supper-time passed, yet without appetite,  
Hungry for one thing, the warmth of your kiss.  
Why do the sprites who bask in the Six Regions  
Allow so cruel a cold to bite us here?  
It is their duty to be good to mortals,  
And often I remind them. But no use,  
For they are idle, in the mild fields playing,  
Nor do trouble to bestow their comforting.  
Such is their negligence, I have petitioned,  
Raising respectful hands to their Master and mine,  
To Mahamuni, his image by the city,  
And to Sulamuni in Tavatimsa,  
Which is beyond the cities of this world.

### PYATHO — JANUARY

She recalls how her Lord looked at his going and troubled by a cold wind from strange places fears he is dead.

This is a colder winter than last year,  
A bright sun, but a north wind, and a fog  
In the mornings like a blanket of fluffy cotton;  
And though I settle cloth screens round my bed,  
The draught gets under them and makes me shiver.  
If only you were back with me again,  
Wearing the gold ring that the King gave you!  
I can exactly see you as you looked  
The morning when you left me and set out,  
Your eye as large and liquid as a planet,  
And in your air something obscure and lofty.  
There is a region where sun never shines,  
The icy valleys of the Himalaya,  
Wherein are marvels, elephants as pale  
As lily flowers, with trunks as pythons long,  
And tigers with the eyes of cooing doves,  
And doves with eyes that burn with yellow fire,  
And men the hue of lapis lazuli.  
From those unwonted vales a wind is blowing,  
A wind of spectral fancies which torment,  
And toss my mind, and squeeze my breath away  
With dread that I may never see you more.

### TABODWE — FEBRUARY

She relates how she sat up all night on the full moon of T'abodwe, watching the people tug for good crops and how at dawn, seeing the wild flowers, she recalled that her Lord had been absent a full year.

My window fronted on the rising moon.  
The cold was gone; through the soft evening air  
Festival crowds flowed into the capital,  
Singing the songs that fructify the land,

Till the whole city was full of their sound.  
Laughing and shouting in light-heartedness,  
Groups of men gathered at the tugs-of-war,  
Settling their friends and sisters ready in line,  
Urging the girls to grip well on the rope,  
And the boys to give a long pull together.  
So for hours were they happy and high-spirited,  
In bright clothes, very bright in their gold ornaments,  
The beat of the band-music always higher  
When a new tug began or the victors danced.  
Night advanced; the moon swung over the city;  
The streets were still full of the same mad crowd,  
That posed and pirouetted, shouting jests,  
Not one of them with any thought of sleep.  
I sat on watching; midnight was long gone;  
The early cocks were crowing; still I lingered,  
A lonely woman, lonelier that joy  
So lavishly was shared by all but her.  
And suddenly the eastern sky was pearl!  
The birds awoke, began to hop and stretch,  
Open their wings and wheel above the tops,  
And fill the forest morning with their song.  
My eyes went after them, I saw beyond  
Flowers everywhere, on tree and every bush  
A fire of flowers, the same wild flowers of spring  
I plucked a year ago with such fond prayers,  
With such fond hopes, for you have not come back.



# Letter to Lafayette\*

by Henry Miller



I DON'T suppose I'd ever have used an automobile if it hadn't been for Dudley and Flo of Kenosha. Dudley is one of the geniuses I promised to talk about earlier in this book. Dudley and Lafe, because if it hadn't been for Lafe, Dudley might have died in the womb and *The Letter to Lafayette* never been written.

Dudley says it starts with the rowing machine: "I dream an empire," etc. But for me it starts in the deep South, just prior to the arrival of Salvador Dali and his Caligari cabinet. No, it starts even a little before that—with *Generation*, a still-birth that ushered in a great friendship. It was like this, to be specific. . . . About four in the morning a friend of mine received a telephone call from Kenosha, or maybe it was from Des Moines. A young man named Dudley (not to be confused with Joe Dudley, the drummer) and another young man named Lafayette Young, both of good parentage, sound in wind and limb, somewhat exalted and somewhat befuddled, telephoned to ask if Henry Miller was in town and could they meet him. About a month later they arrived in a broken-down Ford with a little black trunk, phonograph records and other necessities. To make it brief we became friends immediately. They had with them their embryo, *Generation*. I think it was late winter at the time, or early spring. Behind *Generation* was a then non-existent book to be called *Letter to Lafayette*, Lafayette being none other than little

---

\* This is a fragment of the forthcoming *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*.

Lafe, Lafe Young of Des Moines. In a few weeks *Generation* had been killed. But the *Letter to Lafayette* survived the ordeal. In fact, it began to sprout like a liverwort. By summer we found ourselves thrown together under the same roof on a great Southern estate. That is, Dudley, little Flo, his wife, and myself. Lafe was off in limbo, but promising to arrive any day. Then one night, towards three in the morning, a visitor arrived unexpectedly and we all fled precipitately. That's another story, one that I may have to write posthumously, so to speak, because it involves libel and slander.

Our next meeting took place in Kenosha, at the home of Dudley and Flo. Lafe was then in Des Moines, sucking his big toe. To my great delight Dudley had begun the *Letter to Lafayette*. He was writing it with the stub of a pencil in a microscopic scrawl in a big ledger. It was no longer a dream but a fat, stubborn actuality. I had just seen the rowing machine upstairs in the attic where the contents of the mysterious black trunk had been spilled about. "I have another vehicle," said Dudley—"an abandoned car rescued from the auto cemetery: *my empire*. I stand still and go everywhere. No wheels, no motor, no lights, no traction. I wander through jungles, rivers, swamps, deserts—in search of the Mayas. We are trying to find our father, our name, our address."

When I heard this last sentence I jumped. I knew at once he had found the clue. A few months ago he was confused, obfuscated, struggling to wean himself of the piano man, that obsessive, paranoiac image which he had been describing in hundreds of drawings and which he talked about so magnificently that I almost became obsessed by the piano man myself.

"It's like a grand sickness," said Dudley, speaking of the *Letter* which he had at last begun. "I want to wash up my own life and literature too. The book opens with a nightmare, an evacuation, a *complete waste of images*."

There again was a phrase which captivated me. Imagine a young man in Kenosha, who had never written a line, declaring that he was opening up with "a complete waste of images"!

As I said, Lafe was still in Des Moines, sitting in the lavatory which he had turned into a workshop. Lafe is a masterful letter writer, a practised hand, as it were. "It'll all be blue," he writes. "I demit. I abdicate. I renounce." Or else "I've got faith—in death." The words are strewn over the pages like leaves tossed about by a storm. There's always a green wind, green boughs, the rustle of spring, the beat of the tom-tom, the click of the adding machine, the snores of the demented. "It's all washing up," he writes, and then goes on to speak of Stavrogin or Sade or Villon or Rimbaud, or the little straw men beneath the ice whom he glimpsed while walking through the inferno with Dante and Virgil. "What's a letter?" says Lafe. "A few hundred words, a ream of paper, a barrel of pork, a spew here, there or in any public place. I don't need you. I abdicate. I demit." Et cetera. He's like a man building a bonfire under the seat of your pants. He has nothing to do but live out the life of the grand duke in a madhouse located in a city inhabited by ghosts, indulging every whim and caprice which enters his bean while realizing in action the behavior of characters whom he admires in the books he devours like a tapeworm. In a short while Lafe will pack his bag and go to Mexico, there to write a book on Norman Douglas or Henry Miller, of which he will publish just two copies, one for his subject and one for his family—just to prove that he is not altogether worthless.

"Dear Lafayette," the book begins—in the studio the morning after. *What studio?* Don't ask me! Flo is down with fever. She becomes prophetic. She annihilates in all directions. There are soliloquies in the grand manner. "I begin here," says Dudley, "at the lowest point of my life. I work backwards and forwards—a counterpoint. Yes, an infinite jam session. I will go on writing it eternally. It will never finish. It is the book of life going on forever. *It's process*, that's what it is." (You can imagine how thrilling this will be to the listeners of "Information Please!")

Back of everything is the piano man whom he met in a dive in Chicago one evening. I saw the drawings he made of him and they haunted me. He makes soap carvings of him too—always



"the solitary ego." He carves him little suits to wear, a little chair, a little toilet, a little mistress—all for the little man, his ego. The piano man has become for Dudley the symbol of the final artist in the world. "He's smothered in the womb," he says. "He's drugged, hypnotic and hypnotized, obsessed. *He's also all evolution.*" (That "also" is another magnificent idiosyncrasy.) He goes on sublimating about the solitary ego, the forgotten man who is part ape, part negro, the piano man playing in the womb under water amidst the vestigial wrack of the evolutionary wheel. At times he's a skeleton—or just an aristocrat with fluorescent lighting. Sometimes he's a nervous system. Or again he's God, the God of Dudley's conceptual world. In the end, when there is nothing left but sand and a green wind blowing over all, he becomes an octopus strumming a pearl shell. The great thing, as Dudley puts it, is that he makes the dream a process. As the final artist he becomes the dream realized. . . . As Lafe would say—"Jesus, this is *it!*" Meanwhile, as the form unrolls, as the oracular melts into the prophetic, as the images waste away, some one seems to be sleeping upstairs, some one as profoundly asleep as that cataleptic figure in the foreground of Marc Chagall's famous picture. A man, or maybe a woman, on the road to Verona, passing a night in Gary off the highway with a sandwich in his pocket and a revolver to his lips. The man is writing a letter to some one he may never see again, a man without an address, a man whose father no pulmotor could restore to life again even though the fire department had been called out. A man, let us be brief and succinct, who has just been released from the nut house. It becomes necessary, therefore, to define, to redefine, everything: life, art, human relations, the habits of birds and dogs, the species and genera of plant life, water animals, the marine tides, the oceanic currents, the earth's bulge, the meteor drifts, and so on. Even perspective comes in for its share, and swamp grass and fire damp and rust and mould. "I'm no writer," he keeps repeating. "I'm just talking. A lost soul. I'm communicating with the one man I know. I'm talking blind." The talk swings backwards and forwards, from the studio where Cassandra lies proph-

esying, to the hole in the woods which he had dug to die in after stealing all the books from the public library at Chickamauga. There is the tailor-made suit, also, an item of rare and unpredictable consequences: the Daniel Boone period when everything had to be unique and purposive. There are nostalgic tonsorial pictures on the lawn when little Flo plies the shears and Samson is bereft of his locks. It goes on in two-four time, a steady, diminishing procrastination which comes to a lather under a sycamore tree.

There are passages which emerge clearly, like stained glass, when Nellie, for instance, Nellie of Arkadelphia, gets ready to play bridge with the rich widows of a certain city. Or when the American Legion parade passes a certain bank and Lafe and Dudley really meet for the first time. Or when Lafe arrives in Kenosha on a stream-lined train in a blue denim suit, big boots, horn-rimmed specs, long hair and a goatee. When he puts his walking stick down and walks around with an intense stare. *What do you think of it?* (Anything) And Lafe says: "It's great. It's *inexplicably* great!" Or another occasion, when Lawrence Vail brings in a pigeon bleeding from the rectum and Lafe, filled with sympathy, takes it, looks at it reverently, and then in his inexplicable way, as he wrings the pigeon's neck, says the one inexplicable word: *Haemorrhoids!*

As I see it, this *Letter to Lafayette* will be the flood and the ark both. The meteorological conditions are just right. Somebody has to pull the switch which will open the celestial flood-gates. I think Dudley is the man. If not, some other man of genius will do it. The young men of America are growing desperate; they know they haven't a chance any more. It's not simply that the war is drawing closer each day, it's that war or no war things have to come to a violent end.

A man born in Kenosha, Oshkosh, White Water, Blue Earth or Tuscaloosa is entitled to the same privileges as a man born in Moscow, Paris, Vienna or Budapest. But the American white man (not to speak of the Indian, the Negro, the Mexican) hasn't a ghost of a chance. If he has any talent he's doomed to have it crushed one way or another. The American way is to seduce a

man by bribery and make a prostitute of him. Or else to ignore him, starve him into submission and make a hack of him. It isn't the oceans which cut us off from the world—it's the American way of looking at things. Nothing comes to fruition here except utilitarian projects. You can ride for thousands of miles and be utterly unaware of the existence of the world of art. You will learn all about beer, condensed milk, rubber goods, canned food, inflated mattresses, etc., but you will never see or hear anything concerning the masterpieces of art. To me it seems nothing less than miraculous that the young men of America ever hear of such names as Picasso, Céline, Giono and such like. He has to fight like the devil to see their work, and how can he, when he comes face to face with the work of the European masters, how can he know or understand what produced it? What relation has it to him? If he is a sensitive being, by the time he comes in contact with the mature work of the Europeans, he is already half-crazed. Most of the young men of talent whom I have met in this country give one the impression of being somewhat demented. Why shouldn't they? They are living amidst spiritual gorillas, living with food and drink maniacs, success-mongers, gadget innovators, publicity hounds. God, if I were a young man today, if I were faced with a world such as we have created, I would blow my brains out. Or perhaps, like Socrates, I would walk into the market place and spill my seed on the ground. I would certainly never think to write a book or paint a picture or compose a piece of music. For whom? Who beside a handful of desperate souls can recognize a work of art? What can you do with yourself if your life is dedicated to beauty? Do you want to face the prospect of spending the rest of your life in a strait-jacket?

Go West, young man! they used to say. Today we have to say: Shoot yourself, young man, there is no hope for you! I know some who stuck it out and got to the top—meaning Hollywood—which is like saying the top of a circus tent. Only the other day I was talking to one of them, a chap who when he was hungry killed a calf in the field with a hammer and dragged it home to eat in secret. I was walking along the beach at Santa Monica as he was



telling me the story. We had just passed the mansion of an ex-movie star who had fitted up her dog kennels with parquet flooring so that her dear little Pekinese would not get its paws muddy or itchy. Across the way was the home of a wealthy widow who had grown so stout that she couldn't walk up and down the stairs any longer, so she had an elevator put in to ride back and forth from the bed to the table. Meanwhile another young writer was informing me in a letter how his publisher had given him a job as a handy man about the house, how he worked fourteen hours a day typing, keeping the books, mailing packages, hauling ashes, driving the car, etc., etc. His publisher, who is as wealthy as Croesus, hails the young writer as a genius. He says it's good for the young man to do some honest to God work. He would like to write himself but he's as dry as the Eclogues of Virgil.

What I like about Dudley and some of the others is that they know enough not to want to do a stroke of honest work. They would rather beg, borrow and steal. Six months in harness and they learn their lesson. Dudley could be an art director of he wanted to. Lafe could be the head of an insurance company if he chose to be. They choose not to be. Sink or swim is their motto. They look at their fathers and grandfathers, all brilliant successes in the world of American flapdoodle. They prefer to be shit-heels, if they have to be. Fine! I salute them. They know what they want.

"Dear Lafayette: I am sitting here with the corpse of my youth. . . ." I don't remember how it begins any more, but that's a good enough beginning. Begin with the guano, the little black box filled with the relics of the past. Begin in the vacant lot just outside Gary. Begin with the stench of chemicals, of blasted hopes, of mildewed promises. Begin with the oil wells jutting up from the sea. Begin with the defense program and a fleet of cement boats. Begin with Liberty Bonds and death to the Filipinos. Begin anywhere in the desert of black misery, oppression and humdrum. Start the dynamo going. Put the piano man on his piano stool and give him a reefer. Put the 58,946 crippled and killed this year back on the asphalt pavement and collect the in-

surance money. Call the Western Union and sing Happy Birthday to You. Buy six Packards and an old Studebaker. Get your spark plugs cleaned. Dial 9675 and tune in on Bing Crosby or Dorothy Lamour. Have your straw hat bleached and your white pants pressed. If you're Kosher see that you have a Jewish funeral service—it costs no more than any other service. Be sure to buy a slab of gum, it will sweeten the breath. Do anything, be anything, say anything that comes into your head, because it's all cuckoo and nobody will know the difference. There are now 9,567 magazines on the counters throughout the length and breadth of the land. One more voice, even if it's screechy and hysterical, will not be noticed. The best-sellers are still selling best. Christmas will come earlier this year because of the war. Next year you will have a platinum leg, unless the government commandeers the platinum supply for aeroplane wings. Sing your song and dance your dance—time is short. We are going over the top in 1943 or sooner, if the dirty Communists will permit us. Buy bundles for Britain, it will help to keep another Hindu alive. When you practice the bayonet drill remember always to aim for the soft parts, never for the bone or cartilage or gristle. If you're a dive bomber be sure that your parachute is in order. If you're bored, drop in to your neighborhood cinema and see the bombing of Chungking—it's quite beautiful despite the noise and smoke. Of course, you want to make sure that you drop your bombs on the right people, on the Japs not the Chinks, on the Huns not the Tommies, et cetera. When people scream in pain and terror stuff your ears: *it's only the enemy screaming, remember that*. This year will be a good year for business men in America. Comforting thought. Wages will increase to the bursting point. There will be 349 new novels written and 6,008 new paintings, all by sworn successes, and each one better than the preceding one. A few new lunatic asylums will also be opened during the course of the year. So get in your rowing machine, Dudley, and row like hell. This is a banner year in every respect.

The last message I had from Dudley was about a bicycle trip he was going to make, because the *Letter to Lafayette* was driving

him crazy. Little Flo was going to stay behind and open a ward for neurotics. If it hadn't been for Dudley I would never have bought a car, that's what I started to say. Driving back and forth from one place to another I got attached to Dudley's 1926 Ford. Especially after the record-breaking trip to meet the great Salvador Dali and his belongings, all of which we brought home intact except the bird cage and the musical ink well. Nights when we had nothing to do except to take a stroll to the end of the road and back I talked it all over with Dudley. I mean about the universe and how the cogs mesh. I realized that Dudley was an artist to the fingertips. I realized it more when I compared him with the great Salvador Dali. Dali was always working. When he had finished work he was nothing, not even a dish-rag that you could squeeze a drop of water from. Dudley seemed unable to work—*then*. He was gestating. When he talked he broke out in a sweat. Some people thought he was just a neurotic. Dali hardly noticed him. Dali noticed nothing. It didn't make any difference to him, so he said, where he was; he could work just as well at the North Pole. Dudley was impressionable. Everything filled him with wonder and curiosity. Sometimes, in order not to let the stagnation soak in too deeply, we went to Fredericksburg and ate an Italian meal. Nothing ever happened. We just ate and talked. We talked about everything. We felt elated. We had solved nothing. At noon the next day it would be 110 degrees in the shade, as usual. We would have to sit in our drawers and drink Coca Colas while Dali worked. We would look at the lawn, at the dragon flies, at the big trees, at the Negroes working, at the flies droning. We had Count Basie for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Towards dusk we had a gin fizz or a Scotch and soda. More talk. More languor and idleness. The universe again. We took it apart like a Swiss watch. Dali had by now covered at least three square inches of canvas. He seemed to be glued to his stool. When he joined us at table he thought it his duty to amuse us. Dudley found it difficult to laugh at Dali's antics. He didn't want to be crazy in that way. We had a better time going over to Shep's shack and visiting him and Sophie, his spouse. There were eight

or nine kids in the family and they were always hungry and thirsty. Sometimes we brought the phonograph over and the kids would sing and dance. There were no paranoiac images on hand, just Shep and his family. Coming away Dudley would talk a blue streak. He always had "a complete waste of images" to garnish his talk. He would make us drunk listening to him. When we got tired he went downstairs to the cellar, where he had made himself a studio, and he would draw the piano man again in sixty different attitudes. He was like a miner going down into the pit. He was digging for ore. Now and then he struck a piece and probably hid it away in the big coat which he had made to last the next ten years. He kept everything of value in his coat pockets. When he had nothing else to do, when he got tired of wasting time, he sharpened all his pencils, of which he had a most astounding variety. Sometimes he'd walk over to the car and raise the hood, just to see if all the vital parts were still intact. Sometimes he'd go out with a pick and shovel and mend the road a bit. Dali must have thought him nuts. But he wasn't nuts. He was gestating. If we got real bored we would sit down opposite each other and imitate Lafe coming into a small town and asking for a postage stamp. Dudley knew every crack and crevice in Lafe's psyche. He could even diminish his height by six or seven inches and impersonate Lafe asking for a clean, up-to-date timetable. Or if that got too repetitious he could take out his back teeth and make a noise like Dali chewing mashed potatoes in Spanish. Or he could stretch himself full length on the lawn and cover himself with leaves as he did when he committed suicide once in St. Petersburg, Florida. He could do anything but fly—not because he lacked wings but because he didn't want to fly. He wanted to burrow in the earth, deeper and deeper. He wanted to become a mole and give birth to magnesium or chloride of lime some day. All the time, of course, he was searching for his father, who had once been a football star. And so, little by little, it came time to put it all down and so he began—"Dear Lafayette . . ." I know that it will be the best letter one man ever wrote another, even better than Nijinsky's letter to Diaghilev.



And as he says, it will go on forever, because a letter like this one isn't written in a week, a month or a year, it's infinite, infinitely painful, infinitely instructive. Lafayette may never live to read the last line. Nobody will. The book will go on writing itself with an automatic pistol. It will kill off everything in sight. It will make a clean slate of these ghastly, ghost-ridden places so that those to come may have free range, free fodder, free play, free fantasia. It will do away once and for all with Murder, Death & Blight, Inc. It will free the slaves. Good luck, Dudley, and to you too, little Lafe! Let us all sit down now and write another Letter to Lafayette. Amen!

## About The Contributors



☆ TED BOORUM, a graduate of Dartmouth College, is now in the Medical Corps overseas. ☆ MARY EVELYN CLARKE is a member of the Department of Philosophy at Smith College. Shortly before the war she traveled in Ceylon and Burma. ☆ MAURICE COLLIS was a member of the British Civil Service in Burma for many years. ☆ BARBARA DEMING is on the staff of the Museum of Modern Art. ☆ Articles by ALLANAH HARPER have appeared in a number of magazines. She is now working on a book which will appear next fall. ☆ ROBERT HORAN has published poetry in the *Kenyon Review*, *Furioso*, and other magazines. ☆ JOAN MURRAY wrote this poem shortly before her untimely death. Her work has also appeared in *Decision*. ☆ HENRY MILLER's most recent book is *Sunday After the War*.

# In the Snow-World

*by Robert Horan*



The word leaves our lips in ice;  
warped in a glass, is meaning visible,  
speech becomes frost, and love with weight.  
Where we step, the inches of the world  
sink in a little, filling up the wound.  
All are in their houses, looking out.  
The birds, wrapped in a room of string,  
blink back at the light, remembering  
yesterday's noisy rain and hammering  
today turned solid, like a burial.  
In scarlet holes in hills the foxes  
find the air too tight to breathe,  
stretched thin and shared by many miles.  
They turn now in their sleep of leaves,  
and hearing death break faintly in a bugle,  
run low like a ribbon, escaping, through the trees,  
the teeth of the horse, the hunter like an eagle.  
Somewhere the deer are leaping in the weather  
surprised by the gentle ways and shapes of water.  
With no leaf left, the snow brings bread,  
a showered communion over all the trees;  
foils and fills the branches, pillowing  
the rock they lean in, crowning limbs  
with a cold halo of ice and a glistening.  
And all are afraid of the absence of sound,  
as of something missing. Tunneling underground,  
the mole stops at a frozen, black horizon;

the bat, hung like leather from his feet,  
swings silently, his eyes closed twice  
against this mystery. And with humanity,  
the road that leads into the village  
shows monuments, implies a cemetery.  
The children's snowmen with luminous black eyes  
will wistfully melt, a broom their wooden weapon  
against the flashing minute of winter sun.  
Over their porous cheeks, like ink in cotton,  
flow charcoal tears. We stand in the center  
to see the world fall down from its arch,  
caught, as our own far heaven disappears  
and everyone else's heaven is getting closer,  
covering us with memories and years.  
Like the man, the size of a thimble, stuck  
in the solid and circular glass of childhood,  
with neither a sun nor a moon; when it is shook,  
the whispering wild world of snow and light  
smothers him under for our own delight.

## BOOK REVIEWS

MAURICE COLLIS: *The Land of the Great Image*. Alfred A. Knopf.

If, as has been suggested, the lack of understanding between the classic and romantic temperaments is due less to the conflict between reason and imagination than to the preference of the classic for the pleasures of recognition found in the true and familiar, of the romantic for the stimulus of surprise afforded by the marvelous or the unknown, Mr. Collis's latest work will make a very wide appeal. For his narrative introduces the reader to things so remote from everyday experience and characters so amazing that it requires a real effort of imagination to believe in their existence in any age or clime; yet the scene of its central episode is that territory on the northeast coast of the Bay of Bengal with which the recent Burmese campaign has made us familiar, and the book is a skillfully edited selection from the records of sixteenth and seventeenth century travellers, into which Mr. Collis has woven his own descriptions of the things and places referred to. Moreover it is his thesis that civilizations apparently quite alien often reveal startling similarities of purpose. Thus a careful scrutiny may even exhibit a kinship between the far-away enterprises he records and some of our modern political preoccupations.

The book presents no continuous story, though the episode referred to is complete in itself. This has been compiled from a Spanish book of travel, written in 1643 by a Portuguese monk, Manrique by name, who had undertaken several diplomatic missions on behalf of his countrymen to the court of Arakan.

This country, then an independent kingdom, was an important naval power and appeared the natural ally of the Portuguese colonies in Asia against the powerful Moghul Empire which held all India in its grasp. It is not, however, Mr. Collis's aim simply to reproduce the astounding story here unfolded. He intends rather "to build up a picture of the society both in Portuguese Asia and in some of those kingdoms with which it had dealings" (p.161), a task he carries through with great economy and skill.

His introductory account of the Portuguese dominion in Asia in the days of its flower calls attention to the little recognized fact that "this system of forts extending from the Red Sea to the Straits of Malacca" was not, like the Dutch and British organizations which succeeded it, primarily a commercial enterprise. "The Portuguese were romantics, . . . conquistadors, as well as traders." "Their irruption into Asia was the culmination of the long struggle against the Moors at home." This, far from leaving the Iberians exhausted, had so invigorated them that "when the Mohammedan power was overthrown in the Peninsula . . . they set sail across the oceans to discover the Americas and the African sea-route to the East, (p. 5), conceiving this eastward drive as a further crusade against the Moslem hordes now extending their sway over the Orient. Thus Vasco da Gama set sail on his first voyage to India in 1497 bearing a banner embroidered with the Cross of the Military Order of Christ, an emblem of the mission entrusted



to him by the King of Portugal who had obtained from Pope Alexander VI a Bull entitling him to "all the lands which might be discovered east of a line drawn north and south at a distance of 370 miles from the coast of Europe" (p. 8). And to crown this temporal dominion by a spiritual one there followed the Jesuit, St. Francis Xavier, whose purpose was nothing less than "the conversion of all Asia to Christianity."

These far-flung Portuguese possessions had their centre at Goa of which Mr. Collis gives a detailed description, including an account by one of its victims of an *auto da fé* held there in the sixteenth century.

In fulfillment of his expressed aim he also attempts to amplify Manrique's somewhat meagre account of the Buddhism of Arakan and the neighboring countries. For the good friar, though a sincere and courageous soul and evidently a skilled diplomat, reveals himself as a man of limited intellect and narrow ecclesiastical tradition to whom any system of belief but his own appeared the darkest idolatry, a bigotry which contrasts most unfavorably with the tolerance of the yellow-robed brotherhood he would fain have converted. An interesting section is thus devoted to a description of the now deserted temple that once housed the Mahamuni, or (image of) the Great Sage, which was stolen from the Arakanese by the King of Burma when he annexed the territory early in the eighteenth century, and transported to Mandalay where it has remained to this day. Another chapter records the rival traditions concerning the Tooth Relic which the Portuguese claim to have captured and burned as a pagan symbol, though devout Buddhists, who believe relics of the Master to be indestructible, declare this to have been a substitute and continue to venerate a Tooth which, they affirm, remained throughout in their possession at Kandy. An element of excitement is introduced by the accounts of Manrique's journey to Arakan over trackless mountain-sides and through tiger-infested jungle and his expedition, disguised as a Buddhist monk, to bring spiritual consolation to a band of his countrymen held as captives in an Arakanese mountain fastness, whilst the pomp and splendor of an oriental court are vividly conveyed by the records of his encounters with the fantastic monarch, Thiri-thu-dhamma, whose person was so sacred that he gave his audiences through a window. Like a number of other Burmese kings, this ruler cherished delusions of grandeur. His possession of the Mahamuni and of a white elephant, believed to be an early incarnation of a buddha, encouraged him to conceive himself as the Universal Monarch for whose appearance all Buddhists waited, through whom "the peace and happiness of the Excellent Law would be extended to the whole world" (p. 138), who might even prove to be Maitreya, the future Buddha, himself. As he shrank from no atrocities which he believed would aid him to acquire the supernatural power required for the realization of his dream, it was but poetic justice that he should perish, himself a victim of the magic he had practised so unscrupulously.

Mr. Collis has done a valuable service in presenting to the general reader a variety of material of a kind usually reserved for specialists. Only in his closing paragraphs does he invite serious criticism. He has traced an interesting parallel between the Catholic ideal of "spreading over the vast paganism of Asia love and happiness under a Holy Father," who would unite all countries under his spiritual dominion, and the Buddhist dream of the coming of "a saviour who would be Lord of the World, in whose time and for a thousand years there

would be peace and universal salvation" (p. 262). Nor is it extravagant to extend the analogy *mutatis mutandis* to the vision arising today of "a world authority vowed to right conduct . . . and strong enough to enforce this in all international relations"; and few of his readers will quarrel with his repudiation of the claim of Japan that hers is the mission of rescuing Asia from the depredations of the militant nations of the West and uniting the lands of the Buddha into one vast oriental kingdom. But it is surely a very dubious assumption that this task of unification is a new version of the White Man's Burden laid, it would seem, upon this country. "America," Mr. Collis tells us, "will be able to do in twentieth century terms what Rome and Goa sought to but could not do in terms of the sixteenth century"; for "the millions of Asia look to America as a saviour and long for the universal state *which she alone can create for them*" (p. 265, italics mine). One wonders whether, for all his intimate knowledge of their customs and traditions, Mr. Collis really understands the sentiments of "Asia's millions" at all. Granted that the idea of a Japanese hegemony makes but a slight appeal, it may yet be doubted how many of its educated public—which is after all but a fraction of Asia's millions—envisage a world federation, or even desire international co-operation on more than a limited scale. One thing is certain: the healthy development of a continent as of an individual is from within. It is not to the West that these peoples look for the fulfillment of their Buddhist ideal of universal compassion and enlightenment. Neither in Europe nor America will Maitreya appear to teach them the solution of the innumerable problems of purely oriental concern whose settlement is a condition of Asia's ability to share in the building of a world society.

MARY EVELYN CLARKE

SIR OSBERT SITWELL: *Left Hand, Right Hand!* Little, Brown and Company.

This gracious book seems to be written to the accompaniment of some solid yet elegant music, such as Handel's Concerto Grosso; or, where the festivals and gorgeous extravaganza of his ancestors burst forth with the splendour of so many rockets and light the northern English skies for a moment with a shower of fire flowers, to Handel's Water Music. How soothing to the senses is this rooted grace, how agreeable to the mind. It has grown out of the lovely summer peace in which the Sitwells' early childhood was spent. They had time to observe, to feel, to know intimately the imperishable things—imperishable because they are eternally renewed—that surrounded them in those gardens and terraces, those woods and lakes at Renishaw. Out of that enviable peace and stillness in which Osbert, Edith, and their nurse floated in their flat blue boat, "watching the fish flickering in their checkered mail through trailing avenues of weeds," out of that stillness the poetry was born which later was to add a new melody to English literature.

Here the essence of childhood is fantastically described. The reason children see so much beauty in common buttercups and daisies is not because they have not seen larger and more wonderful flowers,

" . . . but because they are, while they play, so much nearer the ground, to the impeccable yellow glaze of the buttercup bowls and the complicated rosy

design of the speckled daisy center and the manifold radiating petals; to the infinite, bloomy complications of these simplicities, set against their background of grass, that enormous wood the blades of which point to heaven as if they were the spears and lances of a great army, and the green depths of which are full of crepitation and the whirring of wings, while through them move fearful monsters, comparable to those painted by Hieronymous Bosch—armoured beetles, spectral green grasshoppers chafing their legs, and caterpillars with vast protruding eyes. Above these writhing and terrifying creatures, far above them, tower the flaming forest trees, sorrel or flowering grass, and huge moons of the oxeys daisies seem to them to hang down from the sky.

I see, still, the faces of the children who played with me, as we peered into the green depths, looking for new flowers."

But it was not always afternoon. Nocturnal terrors waited at the end of each bee-laden day. Bat and Owl, great unlighted rooms, had to be overcome before the presence of his mother, saying goodnight to him in his bed, could chase away the monsters of the unseen and give him her protective peace. His mother in a yellow or pink satin evening dress, filling the room with the scent of gardenias and tuberoses. These moving passages telling of fear of the dark add another chapter to the already immortal pages of Proust and Rilke.

The sea, too, formed an important part of the background of Sir Osbert's childhood. There are magnificent descriptions of the sea,

"I loved all its moods, but especially the storms, and the fine, blown-out mornings that followed them, when the sands at the water's edge were tumbled, laden with inexplicable treasure, sea fruit and weed and strange shapes in wood and bone and in substance black as jet and weighing as light."

Never, I think, have the scenes on the sands at an English seaside resort been more perfectly drawn—the minstrels, the hurdy-gurdy players, the Cat Man who mewed to himself on the sands, the bathing-machines on wheels which took one into the sea.

For all their magnificence and period beauty, the grand old ladies with their aquiline noses and imperious manner, their faces coated with dead white powder, whose dominating presences fill the first part of the book, are far less interesting and sympathetic than the delightful collection of rustic characters and remarkable servants whose solid common sense and natural wisdom were a healthy balance to the over-rarified atmosphere of the drawing room. They taught me, Sir Osbert says, far more than any governess or tutor, with their knowledge of flowers, wild animals and everything pertaining to the sea. Far sadder, it seems to me, than the inevitable passing of Noble Lords, is the probable extinction of these lovable rural figures, whom Sir Osbert understands and appreciates so well, and in whose company he has so often taken refuge from the pretentious. They had the same, to quote his own lovely line, "wisdom of the blood, that fragile scarlet tree we carry within us." For example, Mark Kirby the gamekeeper, whose love of the woods, in which he crept "at full moon throughout the hours of darkness and thereby gained an infinite experience of their poetry," was so great that people said "he would soon be dead if he had

to leave off going down there" on his nightly vigils in watch for poachers. And old Staniforth, who remembered the Christening of the author's grandfather, when an ox had been roasted whole in the park at Renishaw.

However, there are a few aristocratic characters of unbelievable eccentricity and fantasy. There is Lord Londesborough, whose first act on inheriting the fortune in 1861 had been to provide all his servants with checkbooks so that they could draw on his funds at the bank without worrying him for his authority. Lord Londesborough's amazing theatrical adventures, the thirty thousand pounds he squandered on the fantastic production of *Babil and Bijou*, must be read to be believed. I love the passage in which two future poets are made to undergo the most terrifying ordeals by that eminent sportsman,

"My grandfather Londesborough was devoted to children and had a fascinating manner with them. He liked to take Edith or me—or sometimes both of us, though there was scarcely room—for a drive in his buckboard, a then fast and dashing equipage, balanced precariously on two enormous wheels and drawn by, one would have said, a permanently bolting horse. My grandfather chose this vehicle, because it could be driven over the countryside, without following the road, and could actually cross ditches without its occupants incurring any mishap worse than a severe shaking."

This first volume ends with the coming of industrialism, with all the ugliness it entailed, the horrors of uniformity and mass production. The change from the Victorian to the Edwardian age is admirably portrayed—that most vulgar and materialistic of all periods, where money and birth vied and grew dependent upon each other. Never was taste so bad, houses more hideously furnished, snobbery so incredible.

Rarely has one waited with more impatience for the next volume, than one does on terminating this first, we hope, of several volumes of Sir Osbert Sitwell's autobiography. Think of the delight of his comments on contemporary writers, on painting and poetry.

But it is not for ideas, for political or social implications, that *Left Hand, Right Hand!* is important, it is for lines such as these,

"Cut flat at the top, these (trees) were grotesquely bent by the winter winds, so that they resembled a whole grove of Daphnes frozen in permanent flight from the cool waves below."

ALLANAH HARPER

## Books by Contributors

THE MOTHERLY AND AUSPICIOUS: MAURICE COLLIS. G. P. Putnam.

A study of the Dowager Empress of China, Tzu-Hsi, in the form of a drama, with an excellent introduction. Mr. Collis displays again his penetrating understanding of Oriental psychology.

NEW ROAD 1944: ed. by ALEX COMFORT and JOHN BAYLISS. The Grey Walls Press, London.

An annual English "New Directions," the current issue offers an intelligent variety of English verse and prose, as well as excursions farther afield in its



U. S. and South American sections. There is also prose by Giono, Julien Gracq and the Indian Prem Chand, and poetry by a Hungarian, Endre Ady. All in all a very interesting collection.

DE VILLON A PEGUY: WALLACE FOWLIE. Editions de L'Arbre, Montreal.

In his new book Mr. Fowlie writes thoughtfully of Villon, Scève, Pascal, Baudelaire, Péguy and Claudel. Also included are sections of his journal.

WRITERS AND CRITICS: HENRI PEYRE. Cornell University Press.

A discerning examination of the difficult relationships of writers and critics, between whom there has been historically, as well as at the present day, a serious lack of understanding. The author documents the critical hostility and apathy that have been the lot of most men of genius, often to the detriment of their work. In the second section Mr. Peyre discusses the prospects for a better basis for criticism, critical standards and the need for bolder intellectual leadership.

NEW POEMS 1944: ed. by OSCAR WILLIAMS. Howell, Soskin.

Mr. Williams has employed the excellent idea of including, in his latest anthology, a large section of work by men (and one woman) in the Armed Forces. The choice of poetry is, as usual, a good one.

### SPECIAL NOTICE

A SKELETON KEY TO FINNEGANS WAKE: JOSEPH CAMPBELL and HENRY M. ROBINSON. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

A superlative introduction to Joyce's difficult masterpiece. The authors with patience, passion and scholarship have laid bare the narrative structure of the book and traced many of its puzzling associations. *Finnegans Wake* need no longer be open to the scorn of those who prefer to assume it to be unintelligible and of no literary value.

FLIGHT INTO DARKNESS: RALPH GUSTAFSON. Pantheon.

A first volume by a young Canadian poet. Mr. Gustafson's varied and dextrous poems well merit the beautiful format designed for them by the Pantheon Press.

# Index

## TO VOLUMES I AND II

### CHIMERA

1942-1944



- Arrowsmith, William: *From The House* (poem) I, 1, p. 21
- Auden, W. H.: *Purely Subjective* (article) II, 1, p. 3
- Baff, Beverly: *Script* (poem) II, 3, p. 19
- Baker, Carlos: *Symposium* (poem) I, 1, p. 4
- Barbour, Thomas: *Painted Carousel* (poem) I, 1, p. 18
- Poetry and Speech* (article) I, 1, p. 23
- Beckwith, Osmond: *Cicero* (poem) II, 1 p.56
- Bennett, Joseph: *Dean Swift* (poem) I, 2, p. 35
- Berryman, John: *Cloud and Flame* (poem) I, 3, p. 2
- Blackmur, R. P.: *Crime and Punishment* (article) I, 3, p. 7
- Twelve Scarabs For The Living* (poem) I, 4, p. 17
- The Pedagogue of Sensibility* (article) II, 4, p. 2
- Blair, Arthur: *The Zoo* (poem) I, 2, p. 18
- Boylan, Margaret Currier: *The Adventure of Sara Drabble and The Green Bird* (story) II, 2, p. 27
- Brantley, Frederick: *Discovery* (poem) I, 4, p. 43
- Brinnip, John Malcolm: *The Acrobats* (poem) II, 3, p. 18
- Bromley, Priscilla: *Watch* (poem) II, 3, p.31
- Buchanan, Harvey: *Annunciation* (poem) II, 3, p. 41
- Burke, Kenneth: *The Study of Symbolic Action* (article) I, 1, p. 7
- The Tactics of Motivation* (article) I, 4, p.21
- The Tactics of Motivation* (article, cont.) II, 1, 37
- Burr, Gray: *Harbor Impression* (poem) II, 3, p. 20
- Cahoon, Herbert: *Phoenixes* (poem) II, 4, p. 18
- Cannan, June: *Four Poems* (poems) I, 2, p. 20
- Zero Song* (poem) I, 3, p. 29
- Comfort, Alex: *The Martyrdom of the House* (story) II, 1, p. 23
- The Portable Forge* (story) II, 4, 29
- Deutsch, Babette: *Carapace* (poem) II, 2, p. 25
- Eberhart, Richard: *The Game* (poem) I, 3, p. 44
- Tryptick* (poem) II, 2, p. 15
- White Lily and Hail* (poem) II, 3, p. 33
- Eustis, Helen: *Song With Words* (story) I, 4, p. 35
- Fowlie, Wallace: *The Juggler's Dance: A Note on Crane and Rimbaud* (article) II, 2, p. 3
- The Poetic Tradition of St.-John Perse* (article) II, 4, p. 38
- Frankenberg, Lloyd: *Calendar Piece* (poem) II, 1, p. 57
- Friar, Kimon: *The Coronal* (poem) I, 3, p.30

- Garcia Lorca, Federico: *Waltz in the Branches* (poem, trans. by Juan Lopez) I, 1, p. 17
- Garrigue, Jean: *Iowa City Zoo* (poem) II, 1, p. 54
- Ghiselin, Brewster: *In Time of Fear* (poem) II, 2, p. 40
- Goodman, Paul: *Two Poems of Thanks, More Than Joy* (poems) II, 1, p. 35
- Gottlieb, Elaine S.: *The Flowers* (story) I, 2, p. 23
- Heringman, Bernard: *Museum of Comparative History* (poem) I, 1, p. 26
- Herschberger, Ruth: *Love Like a Capitol Hill* (poem) I, 4, p. 41
- Honig, Edwin: *Ballads for Janus* (poem) II, 3, p. 43
- Howes, Barbara: *Carpe Diem* (poem) II, 3, p. 27
- The Jungle of the Ear* (poem) I, 3, p. 43
- Jarrell, Randall: 1938: *Tales from the Vivenna Woods* (poem) I, 1, 5
- Kauffer, E. McKnight: *Homer* (silk screen print) I, 4, p. 5
- Kees, Weldon: *Girl At Midnight* (poem) II, 3, p. 42
- Klonsky, Milton: *The End Pocket* (poem) I, 2, p. 2
- Lowell, Robert: *The Park Street Cemetery* (poem) I, 4, p. 20
- Maccoy, Guy: *Abstraction* (silk screen print) I, 3, p. 5
- Meisner, Leo: *Oyster Shells* (wood engraving) I, 2, p. 5
- Merriam, Eve: *The Matinee Mind* (poem) I, 2, p. 19
- Mills, Clark: *All Over the Circus Floor* (poem) I, 2, p. 33
- Mizener, Arthur: *Deviceless Darkness* (poem) I, 2, p. 4
- Moore, Nicholas: *Interlude With a Pu-Pu Bird* (poem) II, 3, p. 17
- Morgan, Frederick: *Rose and Thunderstorm* (article) I, 3, p. 31
- Moss, Howard: *The Robbery* (poem) II, 3, p. 29
- The Swan* (poem) II, 1, p. 55
- Murphy, John Maher: *Fair-Day* (poem) II, 4, p. 28
- Neruda, Pablo: *Return of Autumn* (poem, trans. by Lloyd Mallan) II, 3, p. 30
- Newton, David: *Major Catastrophe* (story) II, 3, p. 21
- Patchen, Kenneth: *The Age of Pericles* (poem) II, 2, p. 2
- Rimbaud, Arthur: *The Deserts of Love* (prose, trans. by Louise Varèse) II, 4, p. 26
- Five Prose Poems* (trans by Louise Varèse) II, 4, p. 22
- Rock, Robert: *Eastward in Eden* (poem) I, 1, p. 27
- Rosenberger, Coleman: *The Vaudeville Year* (poem) II, 1, p. 2
- Shapiro, Karl J.: *Satire: Anxiety* (poem) I, 3, p. 3
- Stauffer, Donald: *For A Painting* (poem) I, 1, p. 28
- Swan, Emma: *Amour Among Animals* (poem) II, 3, p. 2
- Stevens, Wallace: *Holiday in Reality* (poem) II, 4, p. 17
- The Motive for Metaphor* (poem) I, 3, p. 42
- Tate, Allen: *To Ford Madox Ford* (article) I, 1, p. 19
- Winter Mask: to the Memory of W. B. Yeats* (poem) I, 4, p. 2
- Troy, William: *The New Parnassianism and Recent Poetry* (article) II, 3, p. 3
- Van Doren, Mark: *Down World* (poem) I, 4, p. 34
- Midland* (poem) I, 1, p. 6
- Vazakas, Byron: *Late Music* (poem) I, 4, p. 42
- Wahl, Jean: *On Poetry* (article) II, 3, p. 35
- Wheelwright, Philip: *The Burnt Norton Trilogy* (article) I, 2, p. 7
- Dogmatism—New Style* (article) I, 4, p. 7
- Williams, Oscar: *On Waking Up At Night* (poem) I, 2, p. 37
- Wise, Robert: *After Mad Grapes* (poem) I, 1, p. 22



## Books Reviewed

- American Harvest*: ed. by Allen Tate and John Peale Bishop. (Maurice Browning Cramer) I, 2, p. 46
- André Gide and the Crisis of Modern Thought*: Klaus Mann. (Henri Peyre) II, 1, p. 58
- Blood For A Stranger*: Randall Jarrell. (Milton Klonsky) I, 3, p. 48
- The Classics and the Man of Letters*: T. S. Eliot. (F. R. B. Godolphin) I, 2, p. 43
- Fire and Ice: The Art and Thought of Robert Frost*: Lawrance Thompson. (Carlos Baker) I, 2, p. 44
- The Growth of American Thought*: Merle Curti. (H. A. Brinser) II, 3, p. 45
- The Human Comedy*: William Saroyan. (David Newton) I, 4, p. 48
- The Law of Civilization and Decay*: Brooks Adams. (Stow Persons) II, 1, p. 61
- Memories of Happy Days*: Julian Green. (M. E. Coindreau) I, 3, p. 47
- The Nature of Literature*: Thomas Clark Pollock. (John F. Wachob) I, 2, p. 42
- New Poems*: 1942: ed. by Oscar Williams. (William Arrowsmith) I, 1, p. 29
- On Native Grounds*: Alfred Kazin. (Kenneth Burke) II, 2, p. 45
- Person, Place and Thing*: Karl Jay Shapiro. (Reuel Denney) II, 2, p. 41
- Poems*: Dunstan Thompson. (Howard Moss) II, 3, p. 48
- Ruins and Visions*: Stephen Spender. (F. Cudworth Flint) I, 2, p. 39
- Selected Poems, 1923-1943*: Robert Penn Warren. (William Arrowsmith) II, 4, p. 44
- Street Songs*: Edith Sitwell. (Allanah Harper) II, 1, p. 59
- VVV No. 4*. (Dorothy Dudley) II, 4, p. 45
- W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939*: Joseph Hone. (Horace Gregory) I, 4, p. 45